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SECURITY INFORMATION

REPORT NO. [redacted]

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COUNTRY Poland

DATE DISTR. 17 March '54

SUBJECT Miscellaneous Information on the Ownership, Use and Distribution of Automobiles

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION 50X1

SOURCE [redacted]

1. Up to the summer of 1953 the number of automobiles in use in Poland was still small. I would estimate that there was one passenger car for approximately each 800 people in Warsaw. This figure included state-owned cars, taxis, and privately-owned vehicles. The highest Party and government officials, ministers, generals, and top-ranking army and U.B. staff officers used automobiles as their normal means of transportation. Other groups such as directors of factories or larger government enterprises, high officials of the ministries or administrative branches and the secret police (UB) travelled by car on official business only. Because of prohibitive prices, cars could be owned by only a privileged few such as doctors of medicine, engineers, professors, artists, and "leading workers" (Przodownicy pracy). This last, small group owned cars only if they were given them as a state prize for achievement in work.

2. Prime Minister BIERUT and Marshal ROKOSSOWSKI were driven in heavily armored cars similar to the Buick-8. Ministers, generals, and high Party and government officials used, according to their status, large or small models of cars such as the Buick, Chevrolet, Citroen, Fiat, Skoda, BMW, Pobieda, and Warszawa. Private owners used new German DKW--IKA; generally old models of such German cars as the DKW, Adler, Hansa, Opel, Borgward, BMW, and Mercedes were used, however.

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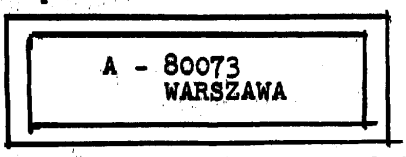
3. The prices of certain new cars were as follows:

DKW (steel body)	16,000 zlotys
DKW (wooden body)	14,000 "
Citroen	40,000 "
French Chausson (autobus)	170,000 "
Skoda	25,000 "
Chevrolet - 1952	100,000 "

I would estimate that there were about 200 1952 de luxe Chevrolets in the country and several thousand older models. The people referred satirically to the Chevrolets as democrats (demokratki), meaning that it was representative of democracy.

4. All license plates were of the same dimensions, about 15 x 35 cm., and were placed on the front and on the rear of the car. The plates were black with white lettering and a white border around them (except for temporary plates; see below). The following is a sketch of a Polish license plate:



Each plate had a five-figure number preceded by a capital letter which differed according to the branch of service. As far as I remember the letters used were as follows:

Cars used by civilian Party and government officials	A
Army cars	C
Taxis and trucks	T
Privately owned cars	H
Temporary license plates before final registration (yellow)	P

The name of the seat of the voivodship appeared under the number.

Cars used for driving lessons were marked, in addition, by round blue plates with the inscription on them "Driving Lesson" (Nauka jazdy).

5. Each driver was required to have the following documents:

a. Driver's License (Prawo jazdy). There were three types of driver's licenses issued:

(1) White - for professional drivers of all motor vehicles and for automobile mechanics certified to do repair work.

(2) Red - for professional drivers of cars, trucks, and buses.

(3) Blue - for non-professionals, and in certain cases, in addition, for 1½-ton trucks and motorcycles.

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Drivers' licenses were issued in the form of an identity card with photograph and personal data. This document did not have to be renewed.

b. Automobile Book (Ksiazka wozu). This document was on a special form. It was made up of four pages printed on both sides and folded. It was regarded as a license and had to be renewed each year.

c. Automobile Technical Book (Ksiazka techniczna wozu). This book contained all technical data concerning the car and recorded all repairs. It was introduced in 1953.

d. Kilometer Control Blank (Blankiet kontrolny przejechanych kilometrow). This document was issued every three months. It contained such data as the number of the car, those permitted to drive it, the town or area in which it could be driven, and the period of validity. According to the position and business of the owner, issuance was made for driving within Warsaw or within one or several voivodships. I assume that it was possible to have permanent permission to travel throughout all Poland. The Kilometer Control Blank was, therefore, regarded as a special permit because it specified within what area the car could be driven. It was, however, always advisable to have travel orders (delegacja sluzbowa), especially when driving from one city to another. It was necessary that all persons riding in the car be entered on the travel orders. No special orders were issued for travelling in restricted areas, but a special permit was necessary for entrance into a restricted installation.

6. There were no stated or implied restrictions to owning an automobile if one could afford it. However, owning an automobile did tend to attract undue attention. Although there was no direct control over an individual's use of his car, there were those restrictions mentioned above, and, most important, the regulation that the driver of a private automobile could officially buy gasoline for only 200 km. per month. Daily mileage was entered by the owner of the car on the Kilometer Control Blank.

7. Gasoline was not rationed. At the same time, the limitation of travelling only 200 km. per month constituted a kind of rationing. The system certainly cut down on gasoline consumption. Automobiles with diesel engines, as far as I remember, did not have to have permits for travelling outside the city limits. There was only one grade of gasoline and it was mixed with alcohol. One could always buy any amount of gasoline and oil at service stations in Warsaw, as well as in the country, by saying to the attendant that no receipt was necessary and giving a tip. This was done illegally by service station attendants because they were poorly paid. They tried to make money on their own by selling gasoline saved by maneuvering the pumps, especially when servicing large trucks. The price of gasoline was, in 1953, 4.80 zloty per liter.

8. The professional people like doctors and engineers, and other private owners drove their cars themselves. The officials were always driven.

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9. Each private automobile was registered in the traffic office (urzad ruchu) located on Washington Street in Warsaw. Blanks containing the owner's name, his address, and general data on the car had to be filled out and signed. In addition, an affidavit issued by a Notary Public certifying true ownership of the car was required. The

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car was also checked. If the inspection was satisfactory, the owner was given an Automobile Book, licence plates and a Kilometer Control Blank. The cost of registration was between 50 and 60 zlotys. The Automobile Book had to be renewed every year and, at the same time, the car was inspected.

10. In case of war all cars were to be mobilized and taken over by the army according to a new law issued in June or July 1953. The regulation read that every motor vehicle, horse-driven cart, and bicycle was to be kept in readiness for inspection. Each motor vehicle was to have gasoline adequate for 300 km. (horse-drawn carts were to have 20 kg. of fodder for each horse) at any time when called for service. Damaged and unserviceable vehicles had to undergo inspection also. After inspection no alterations could be made on a vehicle without approval. Up until July 1953, inspection had not been carried out as decreed.

11. Spare parts for automobiles were next to impossible to get. Certain parts, however, such as pistons, piston rings, piston pins, and some small electrical parts were easier to get than others. No electric bulbs were obtainable. In order to buy a storage battery, the old battery or, at least, the lead from it had to be turned in.

12. There was a great scarcity of rubber in Poland. Permission to buy several feet of rubber hose, for example, had to be obtained from the State Commission for Economic Planning. After receiving the requisition permit (przydzial) from this office, one could buy. However, 99 out of 100 requests were refused. Stomil was the only tire factory in Poland. Tires could only be bought with a certificate of permission, and it was necessary sometimes to wait as long as a year to get this certificate. Certificates could sometimes be obtained on the grounds that the owner was a government official or a doctor of medicine since this was considered a valid reason for request. The price of a 16 x 525 tire was about 600 to 700 zlotys. The average life of a tire was about 10,000 km. The most inferior part of the tire was the canvas or material to which the rubber was cemented. The black market price of a tire was about 3,000 zlotys, but this type of purchase was almost impossible.

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